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OLD ENGLISH *HÆRFEST*.

OE. *hærfest*, which, like German *herbst*, meant 'autumn' not 'harvest,' forms a well-known exception to the rule (Sievers, § 79) that *æ* (< WGc. *a*) breaks to *ea* before *r* + consonant. Of course, it forms an exception also in the lack of *i*-mutation; for it is **hierfest*, not **hearfest*, that we should expect in West Saxon, compare German *herbst* < MHG. *herbest* < OHG. *herbist*.

It has been suggested, and accepted as possible by Sievers (§ 79 A. 2, 50 A. 2), that OE. *hærfest* is for **haruβist*.¹ This explanation is, however, unsatisfactory, particularly in that it in no way helps us to account for the Middle-English form *hervest*. If we accepted it and regarded the *æ* as short, we should be under the necessity of supposing that the *i*-mutation through *u* (cf. Morsbach, *ME. Gr.*, p. 131) was later than the Old-English period, or that it took place to some extent in Old English, but that no record of it has come down to us, though all the Middle-English forms are descended from it!

There is, however, an explanation which, on the one hand, does not require us to presuppose any other form for Old English than for the other Germanic dialects, and, on the other hand, accounts perfectly for both the Old-English and the Middle-English forms. We have but to heed the principle that a vowel that behaves like a long vowel and not like a short vowel is *long* (cf. *JGP.*, I, p. 475), that is, the Old-English word was *hærfest* not *hærfest*. How such a vowel became long is another question, which we may or may not be able to answer, according to the circumstances. In this case we do not have far to look.

¹ I print *β* for the voiced bilabial fricative, often printed with a crossed *b*.

Germanic **harβist* is a derivative of a stem *harβ*, IE. *karp* (καρπός, Latin *carpere*) 'fruit,' 'gather fruit,' cf. Kluge. But this stem was early lost in Germanic, and persisted only in the derivative **harβist* 'the time when fruits and grains are ripe,' 'autumn.' As the original meaning of the stem was long forgotten, and the word had passed from the meaning 'harvest' to that of 'autumn,'² it was the most natural thing in the world that it should be associated with the similar-sounding word *hār*. Old-English *hār*, our *hoar* or *hoary*, meant 'gray' both as applied to things in general and as applied to the hair in age. Autumn has from time immemorial been associated with old age. It is the season when 'the pale descending year' begins to show signs of age and its foliage, like the hair on the head, loses its youthful color. First the fields of grain turn white. ἰδοὺ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐπάρατε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑμῶν καὶ θεάσασθε τὰς χώρας, ὅτι λευκαί εἰσιν πρὸς θερισμόν. 'Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest,' *John* iv, 35; which we find echoed in Milton's 'We reck'n more then five months yet to harvest; there need not be five weeks; had we but eyes to lift up, the fields are white already,' *Areopagitica*, Arber, p. 69, Hale, p. 46. So too Carlyle, writing to his mother early in September, 1843, says, 'But they prophesy fair weather now, which I shall be glad of, and the whole country will be glad, for all is white here, in sheaves and stocks, and little got into ricks,' *Atlantic Monthly*, Nov., 1898, p. 674. Later, seed-down takes the place of the blossoms of the summer. Hoarfrost covers the ground in the morning, and then the green of the leaves flashes for a time into variegated tints, only to fade into pale yellow or dun. In England autumn is preëminently the gray season. There is not the glory of the American autumn, either in the color of the foliage or in the clearness of the atmosphere. Duller shades prevail and the air is saturated with moisture. As the season advances, fogs dim the view—

² In Middle-English times the word acquired the meaning 'harvest' as we know it.

till at laſt
 Wreathed dun around, in deeper circles ſtill
 Succeſſive closing, ſits the general fog
 Unbounded o'er the world ; and, mingling thick,
A formleſs grey confuſion covers all.

Thomſon, *Autumn*, 727-731.

Thus, under the influence of *hār*, primitive OE. **harβiſt* became **hārβiſt*, whence by *i*-mutation the uſual Old-Engliſh form *hārfeſt*. This regularly became ME. *hērveſt*, juſt as OE. *clāene* became ME. *clēne* 'clean.' But before the two conſonants *-rv-* the *ē* ſhortened to *e*, whereby we got *hērveſt*, Orm's *herrfeſt* ; exactly as *clēnſen* and *clēnliche* became *clēnſen*, *clēnliche*, Orm's *clennſenn*, *clennlike*, 'cleanſe,' 'cleanly,' cf. Morsbach, *ME. Gr.*, § 96 A 1. The change of ME. *herveſt* to MnE. *harveſt* is alſo normal, compare ME. *ſterven* > MnE. *ſtarve*, ME. *ferthing* > MnE. *farthing*, Sweet, *HES.*, § 789.

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